

Wilson Touts Coal at Hearing with Energy Secretary Steven Chu

Washington, DC - Today, Congressman Charlie Wilson took part in a hearing in the House Committee on Science and Technology that featured U.S. Secretary of Energy, Steven Chu. The hearing was titled "New Direction for Energy Research and Development at the US Department of Energy (DOE)".

"I was very pleased to have the opportunity to hear directly from Secretary Chu today," said Wilson. "Energy is not only an important issue to our country, but it is vitally important to my district in terms of both electricity and jobs."

The purpose of today's hearing was to hear from the Energy Secretary on the Obama Administration's near-term objectives and priorities for energy policy. The discussion focused on research and development (R&D) activities under the Offices of Science, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Fossil Energy, Nuclear Energy, Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability and the Loan Guarantee Program.

"While I am supportive of all the alternative energy initiatives the Obama Administration is exploring, I am particularly concerned that the coal industry gets a fair shake," Wilson commented after the hearing. "I know that clean coal technologies can play an important role in our national energy portfolio, and I appreciated the chance to express that to Secretary Chu."

During the hearing, Congressman Wilson asked Secretary Chu about his views on coal-to-liquid technologies, like those that would be employed at the expected Ohio Clean River Fuels plant in Wellsville.

"I was pleased to hear that Secretary Chu is exploring coal-to-liquid technology and carbon capture and sequestration, which are vital to the further development of clean coal technologies," Wilson said. "Having the Administration behind innovative coal technologies will go a long way towards improving the energy and job prospects for the Ohio River Valley."

Following is the opening statement Congressman Wilson prepared for today's hearing:

Opening Remarks from Rep. Charlie Wilson (OH-06)
House Committee on Science and Technology, Energy and Environment Subcommittee
hearing: "New Directions for Energy Research and Development at the US Department of Energy."

March 17, 2009

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing. I appreciate having the opportunity to participate this morning.

Secretary Chu, I would like to welcome you to the Committee this morning; I look forward to hearing your views on our nation's energy research and development efforts. In addition, I look forward to hearing your views regarding coal and the important role it will play as we begin the transition to a low-carbon economy.

As all of you here today know, coal is our nation's most abundant resource and it must play a role in bridging the gap to our energy future. Today, coal serves as the single largest fuel source for the generation of electricity worldwide, and is essential to the U.S. economy. Everyday, coal provides affordable and reliable energy to millions of households, businesses, and manufacturing facilities throughout our nation. Furthermore, in my home state of Ohio and around this country, coal is not only a valuable source of electricity, but it is a valuable source of jobs. The Ohio coal industry directly employs over 3,000 individuals each year.

Today, America is in the midst of a long-term energy crisis. And as the climate change debate continues to intensify in Congress, we must find ways to balance our nation's energy, economic and environmental needs. We are all excited about the future of alternative energy and the idea of weaning ourselves off foreign resources, but we must be realistic about the short-term needs that an energy intense nation will require. We cannot disregard an important "home-grown" resource like coal that we already have in abundance.

As Congress moves forward on this important issue, clean coal technology and carbon capture and sequestration technology must play a key role. The \$3.4 billion for clean coal technologies including carbon capture and sequestration provided in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is a good step, but more must be done. It is important that Congress and the Department of Energy continue to invest in this vital technology so that as a nation we can truly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move toward energy independence.

I look forward to hearing your testimony today Secretary Chu and look forward to working together in the future.

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